A Hacker Manifesto
Version 5.7

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>01. There is a double spooking of the world, the double of abstraction. The fortunes of states and armies, companies and communities depend on it. All contending classes – the landlords and farmers, the workers and capitalists – revere, yet fear the relentless abstraction of the world on which their fortunes yet depend. All the classes but one: the hacker class.

>02. Whatever code we hack, be it programming language, poetic language, maths or music, curves or colourings, we create the possibility of new things entering the world. Not always great things, or even good things, but new things. In art, in science, in philosophy and culture, in any production of knowledge where data can be gathered, where information can be extracted and where in that information new possibilities for the world are produced, there are hackers hacking the new out of the old. While hackers create these new worlds, we do not possess them. That which we create is mortgaged to others, and to the interests of others, to states and corporations who control the means for making worlds we alone discover. We do not own what we produce – it owns us.

>03. And yet we don't quite know who we are. While we recognise our distinctive existence as a group – as programmers, artists, writers, scientists or musicians – we rarely see these ways of representing ourselves as mere fragments of a class experience that is still struggling to express itself as itself, as expressions of the process of producing abstraction in the world. Geeks and freaks become what they are negatively through the exclusion by others. Hackers are a class, but a virtual class – a class as yet to hack itself into manifest existence as itself, as the utopian class.

>04. Abstraction may be discovered or produced, may be material or immaterial, but abstraction is what every hack produces and affirms. To abstract is to construct a plane upon which otherwise different and unrelated matters may be brought into many possible relations. It is through the abstract that the virtual is identified, produced and released.

>05. As the abstraction of private property was extended to information, it produced the hacker class as a class. Hackers must sell their capacity for abstraction to a class that owns the means of production, the vectoralist class – the emergent ruling class of our time. The vectoralist class is waging an intensive struggle to dispossess hackers of their intellectual property. Patents and copyrights all end up in the hands, not of their creators, but

in those of the vectoralist class that owns the means of realising the value of these abstractions. The vectoralist class struggles to monopolies abstraction. Hackers find themselves dispossessed both individually and as a class.

> 06. Production produces all things, and all producers of things. Production produces not only the object of the production process, but also the producer as subject. Hacking is the production of production. The hack produces a production of a new kind, which has as its result a singular and unique product and a singular, unique producer. Every hacker is at one and the same time producer and product of the hack and emerges in its singularity as the memory of the hack as process.

> 07. The hack produces both a useful and a useless surplus, although the usefulness of any surplus is socially and historically determined. The useful surplus goes into expanding the realm of freedom wrested from necessity. The useless surplus is the surplus of freedom itself, the margin of free production unconstrained by production for necessity.

> 08. The production of a surplus creates the possibility of the expansion of freedom from necessity. But in class society, the production of a surplus also creates new necessities. Class domination takes the form of the capture of the productive potential of society and its harnessing to the production, not of liberty, but of class domination itself. The ruling class subordinates the hack to the maintenance of forms of production that maintain class power, and the suppression or marginalisation of other forms of hacking.

> 09. The class struggle, in its endless setbacks, reversals and compromises returns again and again to the unanswered question – property – and the contending classes return again

and again with new answers. The working class questioned the necessity of private property and the communist party arose, claiming to answer the desires of the working class. The answer, expressed in the Communist Manifesto was to "centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state". But making the state the monopolist of property has only produced a new ruling class, and a new and more brutal class struggle. But perhaps this was not the final answer, and the course of the class struggle is not yet over. Perhaps there is another class that can pose the property question in a new way – and offer new answers to breaking the monopoly of the ruling classes on property.

10. Information, like land or capital, becomes a form of property monopolised by a ruling class, in this case a class of vectoralists, so named because they control the vectors along which information is abstracted, just as capitalists control the material means with which goods are produced and pastoralists the land with which food is produced. Information circulated within working class culture as social property belonging to all. But when information in turn becomes a form of private property, workers are dispossessed of it and must buy their own culture back from its owners, the vectoralist class. The whole of time, time itself, becomes a commodified experience.

11. Vectoralists try to break capital's monopoly on the production process, and subordinate the production of goods to the circulation of information. The leading corporations divest themselves of their productive capacity, as this is no longer a source of power. Their power lies in monopolising intellectual property – patents and brands – and the means of reproducing their value – the vectors of communication. The privatisation of information becomes the dominant, rather than a subsidiary, aspect of commodified life. As private property advances from land to capital to information, property itself becomes more abstract. Just as capital as property frees land from its spatial fixity, information as property frees capital from its fixity in a particular object.

12. The hacker class, producer of new abstractions, becomes more important to each successive ruling class, as each depends more and more on information as a resource. The hacker class is the class with the capacity to create not only new kinds of object and subject in the world and new forms of property in which they may be represented, but new kinds of relations beyond the property form.

13. Property constitutes an abstract plane upon which all things may be things with one quality in common, the quality of property. Land is the primary form of property. Pastoralists acquire land as private property through the forced dispossession of peasants who once shared a portion of it in a form of public ownership. Capital is the secondary form of property, the privatisation of productive assets in the form of tools, machines and working materials. Capital, unlike land, is not in fixed supply or disposition. It can be made and remade, moved, aggregated and dispersed. An infinitely greater degree of potential can be released from the world as a productive resource once the abstract plane of property includes both land and capital. But the abstraction of commodity production does not end

with capitalism. The transformation of information into an even more abstract form of property, abstracted even from its material expression, takes commodification into a third, as yet uncharted phase of development.

14. Hackers must calculate their interests not as owners, but as producers, for this is what distinguishes them from the vectoralist class. Hackers do not merely own, and profit by owning, information. They produce new information, and as producers need access to it free from the absolute domination of the commodity form. Hacking as a pure, free experimental activity must be free from any constraint that is not self-imposed. Only out of its liberty will it produce the means of producing a surplus of liberty and liberty as a surplus.

15. Private property arose in opposition not only to feudal property, but also to traditional forms of the gift economy, which were a fetter to the increased productivity of the commodity economy. The gift becomes a marginal form of property, everywhere invaded by the commodity, and turned towards mere consumption. As vectoral production develops, the means appear for the renewal of the gift economy. Everywhere that the vector reaches, it brings into the orbit of the commodity. But everywhere the vector reaches, it also brings with it the possibility of the gift relation.

16. The hacker class has a close affinity with the gift economy. The hacker struggles to produce a subjectivity that is qualitative and singular, in part through the act of the hack itself. The gift, as a qualitative exchange between singular parties, allows each party to be recognised as a singular producer, as a subject of production, rather than as a commodified and quantified object. The gift expresses in a social and collective way the subjectivity of the production of production, whereas commodified property represents the producer as an object, a quantifiable commodity like any other, of relative value only. The gift of information need not give rise to conflict over information as property, for information need not suffer the artifice of scarcity once freed from commodification.

17. The vectoralist class contributed, unwittingly, to the development of the vectoral space within which the gift as property could return, but quickly recognised its error. As the vectoral economy develops, less and less of it takes the form of a social space of open and free gift exchange, and more and more of it takes the form of commodified production for private sale. The vectoralist class can grudgingly accommodate some margin of socialised information, as the price it pays in a democracy for the furtherance of its main interests. But the vectoralist class quite rightly sees in the gift a challenge not just to its profits but to its very existence. The gift economy is the virtual proof for the parasitic and superfluous nature of vectoralists as a class.

18. The vectoral class struggles at every turn to maintain its subjective power over the vector, but as it continues to profit by the proliferation of the vector, some capacity over it always escapes control. In order to market and profit by the information it peddles over the vector, it must in some degree address the vast majority of the producing classes as sub-

jects, rather than as objects of commodification. The hacker class seeks the liberation of the vector from the reign of the commodity, but not to set it indiscriminately free. Rather to subject it to collective and democratic development. The hacker class can release the virtuality of the vector only in principle. It is up to an alliance of all the productive classes to turn that potential to actuality, to organise themselves subjectively, and use the available vectors for a collective and subjective becoming.

19. Progress is possible, plagiarism implies it.